



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## **School Committee Minutes 01-09-2001**

Approved February 27, 2001  
Arlington School Committee  
Tuesday, January 9, 2001  
Regular Meeting  
7:45 PM

**Present:** Wm. A. Carey, Jr., Chair      Martin J. Thrope  
Joani LaMachia, Vice-Chair      Denis J. Sullivan  
Michael T. Healy, Secretary      Barbara C. Goodman  
David W. McKenna

**Kay Donovan, Joanne Gurry, Marilyn Bisbicos**

**Call To order: 7:55 PM**

**Public Participation**  
None

### **Personnel Announcement**

Superintendent Donovan introduced Gus Martinson as the new human resource professional. Gus stated that it is an honor and privilege to be in Arlington and looks forward to the challenges ahead.

### **Presidential Award/Tom Vaughn**

Chairman Bill Carey presented lead science teacher Tom Vaughn with a plaque recognizing his achievement in receiving the 1999 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science. In addition to the award Mr. Vaughn receives a \$7500.00 grant to use towards the science program at AHS. Mr. Vaughn took the opportunity to thank publicly the administration for their help and their support in the science department at AHS.

### **Secretary's Report**

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was  
Voted to approve the regular meeting minutes of November 28, 2000. Unanimous

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was  
Voted to approve the executive session minutes of March 28, 2000. Unanimous

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was  
Voted to approve the executive session minutes of May 9, 2000. 6 yes 1 abstention.  
(Mr. McKenna abstained)

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was  
Voted to approve the executive session minutes of June 5, 2000. 6 yes 1 abstention  
(Mr. McKenna abstained)

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was  
Voted to approve the executive session minutes of June 16, 2000. Unanimous

Mr. Healy reviewed correspondence.

Mr. Healy stated that for five terms and fifteen years he has represented the people of Arlington. He announced that he would not be a candidate for reelection for the Arlington School Committee. He continued by saying that he appreciates the work done on the committee, the support of his family and the people of Arlington.

Supt. Donovan along with members of the committee were surprised by Mr. Healy's announcement and offered their thanks and appreciation for his accomplishments during his tenure.

Mr. Sullivan acknowledged the human rights assembly he attended at AHS today and thanked Mr. McCarthy for sponsoring the event.

Supt. Donovan informed the committee that four students would visit the Chelsea Schools where Sudanese students are attending. Our students will find out what they can do to be more welcoming to the students who will attend AHS. We have also hired a teacher who has worked in Africa to work with the students when they do arrive.

#### **Vote Pay Raise/Traffic Supervisors & Lunch Aides**

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was

Voted the Superintendent's recommendation to increase the lunch aides' salary from \$6.47/hour to \$7.00/hour retroactive to September 1, 2000. RC: Unanimous

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was

Voted to increase the traffic supervisors' salary by 3% retroactive to September 1, 2000. RC: 6 yes 1 present (Mr. McKenna voted present)

Mr. Healy inquired whether the Superintendent would be looking into increases for substitute teachers in the near future.

#### **Class Size @ AHS**

Mr. McCarthy reviewed the master schedule for the committee. He noted that enrollments are down due to the increase of students in grade 9 & 10 attending private schools because of the economy and in part because of the MCAS. Overall class size @ AHS is excellent. Charlie acknowledged that in some cases where there are 30-33 students in a class, those same students, depending on their class choice, are likely to have more than one class at that size. In response to Mr. Thrope's question on how well we do in quantifiable terms, Mr. McCarthy responded that we have done our best to accommodate student choices and in most cases have been successful in fulfilling students' first 5 choices.

Charlie emphasized that we schedule as many sessions that we need to in order to accommodate student sign up and look for an average class size of 25 students. He believes that this is the best we can do without unlimited resources.

#### **Report of Subcommittees**

##### **Curriculum & Instruction**

##### **Program of Studies**

Ms. Goodman reported out on the subcommittee meeting of December 19th. Discussed at that meeting was the program of studies 2001-2002, update on tracking at AHS and the Parent Curriculum Guide grades 6-8. Charlie reviewed the major changes in the program of studies including the adding and deleting of courses. Ms. Goodman stated that the subcommittee did approve to accept the changes and made the following motion seconded by Mr. McKenna:

Voted to accept the Program of Studies for the 2001-2002 academic year as presented by Mr. McCarthy. Unanimous

Ms. Goodman noted that as chair of that committee she faced the dilemma with the fact that she did not vote to accept the change in the prerequisite in the Social Studies, 9th grade honor class. The proposal is to change the prerequisite for honors, grade 9 World History from a total of A- to a total A grade. Charlie maintained that many incoming 9th grade students were unable to keep up with the demands of the honors workload and as a result the teachers were forced to lower the standards of the class. In an attempt to maintain a true honors class the prerequisite was raised a half of a grade. A lengthy discussion followed. Mr. Sullivan believed that the difference between A- and A is minor; we should not penalize incoming students. Ms. LaMachia commented that to provide some clarity a lot of the subcommittee meeting focused on grade inflation and its implications. Even though it is only a half of a grade it is an attempt to maintain the integrity of those honors courses.

Barbara stated that there has not been any consistent grading in terms of rubrics at the middle school. We are setting a standard. But the grading system for the past 3 years at the middle school has not reflected that standard. Ms. Goodman believed that the requirements were not consistent across the board and would like to maintain the A- requirement in addition to implementing a rubrics grading system at the middle school for 1-2 years. Ms. Goodman emphasized that she cannot support the recommendation until the randomness has been resolved. Mr. Thrope noted that honors courses should not be a reward; it is not an issue of prerequisites but the quality of the honors course. We should not be compromising the quality and experience that we are offering to our students

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Ms. LaMachia

Voted on the recommendation of Mr. McCarthy the Asst. Superintendent to accept the proposed Social Studies changes in the program of studies 2001-2002. 5 yes 2 no (Ms. Goodman & Mr. Sullivan no)

#### **Update on Homogeneous/Heterogeneous Classes @ AHS**

Charlie discussed a variety of reasons why the issue of heterogeneous classes @ AHS might be appropriate. One reason is that the current leveled approach to class organization has revealed considerable inflation. If we had heterogeneous groups, grade inflation would be highly unlikely in that the range of student achievement and the grades for that achievement would be close to a normal curve distribution. Charlie reported however that after discussion with department heads and staff the grades in the 1st marking period were assigned in a more normal distribution.

#### **Parent's Guide**

Joanne informed the committee that the subcommittee approved the parent curriculum. A major addition is to include the school committee position paper to the appendix. Bob Sprague is working on the guide and there will be a parent night upon completion.

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was

Voted the subcommittee's recommendation to add the position paper to the appendix of the Parent Curriculum Guide grades 6-8.

Unanimous

#### **Policy & Procedures**

Mr. Healy reported that Mr. Jim Harding was unable to attend and the subcommittee was canceled. Mr. Healy would like to set up five subcommittee meetings between now and the end of March.

#### **Recess**

Kay suggested that due to the lateness of the hour that we speak to the warrant articles and spend the remainder of the meeting on the budget.

### **Warrant Articles**

Kay stated she would like to submit the usual warrant articles and asked the committee's support on the following:

- .. Revolving Accounts (we may need a new revolving account for an after school pilot program @ Hardy School)
- .. FY2002 School Operating Budget
- .. Special Education
- .. Kindergarten Grant
- .. Acceptance of any new legislation
- .. Acceptance of any and all grants, Federal, State, local, private
- .. Peirce Field AUL's
- .. PTBC warrant, such as fund transfers, allocation for Stratton, Thompson & Peirce
- .. Compensation for School Committees for their service.

Mr. Sullivan's Motion Voted approval to submit the proposed warrants articles to Town Counsel. Unanimous

### **Report of Budget Task Force**

Supt. Donovan reviewed a memo from Finance Committee Chair, Allan Tosti. The memo outlined the projected Revenues and Expenditures for fiscal year 2002. At the task force meeting Mr. Tosti highlighted the Increased General Fund Revenues, Proposed Budget Increases to date, as well as major possible negatives and positives. Currently the Town of Arlington is looking at a deficit of \$2,167,000.00.

Kay will invite our state legislators to the next meeting to explore what we can do to speed up state aid.

Because the State passed the legislation for teacher early retirement, that put an excess burden on every city and town that pays into the retirement health benefit for the retirees—that is an unfounded mandate. Kay asked the committee to consider whether they want to support legislation that the State should pay that portion of the unfounded mandate. Another issue to look at is how we fund retirees' health insurance

### **School Performance Rating Report**

Supt. Donovan reviewed the MCAS accountability report issued by the Department of Education. Each school/district was expected to improve by a certain percentage and was rated by that benchmark; overall Arlington did very well.

### **Proposed FY2002 School Budget**

The Superintendent spoke to the Budget Summary FY 2001-2001. Major increases are:

- .. Contractual obligations (step increases, longevity, and other adjustments)
- .. Classroom teachers (kindergarten enrollment is expected at 390 students)
- 2 elementary teachers, 1 world language teacher 1 middle school, & 1 high school teacher
- .. Full day kindergarten
- .. Special Education – out of district tuition (we are looking to create a class in Arlington for some of these students to help offset increased costs)
- .. Energy costs
- .. Athletics- transportation and ice time (we have not requested an increase in athletics for a number of years)
- .. Retirement benefits (consists mostly of sick leave buy back)

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was

Voted to move the 11:00 rule for ten minutes. Unanimous

Kay emphasized that even though she has denied most budget requests she is still looking for an increase of \$2,185,427.00 a 7.4% budget increase.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was

Voted the Superintendent's recommendation of the 2001-2002 School Budget of \$31,470,185.00 and a 7.4% increase as presented. Unanimous

On a motion by Mr. Healy and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was

Voted to enter executive session for the purpose of central office negotiations and to return to open session for a vote. RC: Unanimous

### **Executive Session 11:15 –11:20 PM**

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Healy

Voted to increase the salary of the Director of Special Education to \$82,000.00 Retroactive to September 1, 2000. RC: Unanimous

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Healy

Voted to increase the salary of the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum to \$92,000.00, in addition to establish a tax sheltered annuity in the amount of \$1000.00 retroactive to September 1, 2000. Roll Call: Unanimous

Mr. Sullivan's Motion Voted to adjourn @ 11:25 PM. Unanimous